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Lifelong learning in practice

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Lifelong Learning in Practice

Understanding and enabling meaningful participation of
non-traditional students in university education in Uganda

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university of
 groningen

Lifelong Learning in Practice

Understanding and enabling meaningful participation of non-traditional students in university education in Uganda

PhD Thesis

to obtain the degree of PhD at the
University of Groningen
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof. E. Sterken
and in accordance with
the decision by the College of Deans.

This thesis will be defended in public on

Thursday 2 March 2017 at 16.15 hours

by

Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki

born on 27 December 1976
in Nyakibale, Uganda

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Dedication

To Roberta and Kayla
(The two apples of my eye)

Acknowledgement

Without underestimating my personal motivations and ambitions, I wish to acknowledge that the inspiration for this PhD journey dates many years back from my father, Canon Ephraim Buhwamatsiko (RIP). While walking together after the award ceremony of my Bachelor's degree he expressed to me his profound gratitude for the achievement, his desire to see me achieve more, accompanied by an undoubting belief that I could. As we can say, the rest is history. Through making the right connections on my behalf, Prof. Venansius Baryamureeba, Prof. John Nerbonne and Mr Erik Haarbrink provided the momentum to start this journey. The idea to research into the experiences of non-traditional students was inspired by the experiences I encountered in my work as both a registrar and a part-time lecturer at Makerere University, and also by my philosophy of life that all deserve better. It is my sincere hope that this research will enable students who combine studies with work to have a better experience at university.

In carrying out this study, I have become indebted to many people and organisations and I would like to acknowledge them here. With sincere gratitude, I acknowledge the sponsorship offered by the Dutch government through the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP) administered by NUFFIC. Without this scholarship my dream may never have come to pass. I am also grateful to Makerere University for granting me leave to undertake this study, and to both Globalisation Studies Groningen (GSG) and the Graduate School for the Humanities (GSH) of the University of Groningen for the additional financial support to attend and present my work at international seminars and conferences.

In a very special way, I am profoundly indebted and grateful to my supervisors – Prof. Jacques Zeelen and Prof. George Ladaah Openjuru, whose cooperation, intellectual guidance, mentorship, moral support, and encouragement saw me through this study. I thank them too for not giving up on me whenever I was at my lowest ebb, and as I struggled through the years to ‘find the fruits in the forest’. Because of their patience, critical comments and helpful suggestions the thesis reached this final stage. Also thanks to Dr. Josje Van der Linden and Prof. Jude Lubega for the academic mentorship and friendship.

I am also grateful for the opportunity I had to participate in the academic seminars organised by the Youth, Education and Work (YEW) network. From these seminars and other intellectually engaging conversations with colleagues, I often learnt a lot but also was challenged to learn more. My gratitude goes to all the ‘lifelong learners’ – Frank, Josje, Paul, Marit, Lucy, Cuthbert, Maaïke, Femke, Miriam, Nathalie and Thuur, and to the GSG fraternity – Joost, Pieter, Alice, Robert, Mashele, Laksmi, Mahalaxmi, Jarno, Elena, Amaranta and Marloes. Thank you all also for the many light moments we shared. Those meals, coffees and teas were always refreshing and often lessened my missing home.

I wish to extend my appreciation to Jarno of GSG and Erik, Wiebe, Gonny and Ivita of the Research and Valorisation Office of the University of Groningen for taking care of the logistical arrangements. My gratitude is also extended to Marijke and Gorus of GSH for the orientation and

technical guidance pertaining to my studentship, and to Marco of the International Service Desk for providing guidance and technical support on matters pertaining to immigration and residence. Thank you all for giving a service with a smile.

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Many other people made my study stay in the Netherlands an enjoyable experience. By taking me into their homes they made me feel loved. Special mention to Julia and Jacques, Laura and Aart, Henk and Jacqueline, Elena and Joost, Besty and Joop, Pieter and Anneke, Gonny and Leo, Susan and Willem, Naome and Peter, Josje, Sanne, Lina, Sandra, Carol, Liz, Annette, Wendy and Helen. Thank you all for keeping me home away from home and close to my Ugandan experience. My gratitude also goes to the Christian Church Groningen for the fellowship and spiritual support. And special mention to Sieuwke, Ronald, Annelies, Michaela, Corjan, Antonia, Dajo and all internationals of the ‘small group’ that I met from time to time.

The completion of this study would not have been possible without the commitment and acceptance of my co-researchers in Uganda. With them, I took every step of the research in confidence. I thank all for the invaluable time and other resources committed to the whole research process. I appreciate the management and staff of the College of Computing and IT, all interviewees, members of the feedback committee chaired by Mr. Nicholas Mugabi, the external facilitators, the winning teams that published the research newsletter, piloted and distributed the survey, developed the innovation booklet, established the learning and work students (LWS) association, and implemented the orientation action script for first year LWS. Special mention to Mr. Charles Ssentongo for the commitment and support towards implementation of orientation meetings. My gratitude also goes to Ian Akampwera, for being a steadfast ‘learning and work’ cameraman throughout the study.

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The journey did not only challenge me intellectually. Along the way I experienced some health hiccups and therefore, give special thanks to all those who stood by and with me in the period November 2015 to February 2016 when my health failed me. Special thanks to Julia,

Jacques and Sandra for being family and taking good care of me in their homes. Up to now I keep imagining how life would have been without them, for it was the most difficult moment I've ever experienced away from home! Those who came to visit me physically or phoned and chatted to me, kudos. Thanks also to my family and friends in Uganda, who were far away, but whose care and concern silenced the physical distance.

Throughout the study period, I have enjoyed much love, support and encouragement from family and friends. They have shared in both my joys and tribulations. My mother, Beatrice Norah Buhwamatsiko has been and continues to be a great pillar of inspiration. I am proud to call you mother. With your constant love, prayers and encouragement, I could not do it any other way than persist to the end. With father (RIP) you both made great sacrifices for my education. I am sure that today, father is smiling down on us for this achievement. Thank you, thank you, and thank you. My sisters Ruth and Anne, I honestly cannot find the right words to express my gratitude for the overwhelming support you rendered me throughout this study and through the years. I am indeed greatly blessed to be your baby sis! And to Canon Ben, thank you for your kindness and generosity beyond measure. My brothers, nieces, nephews and in-laws thank you all for exhibiting the true meaning of family. For lack of space I am not able to mention each by name nor list all the different forms of support but let me mention this one: relentlessly taking care of our children Roberta and Kayla. From deep down in my heart, I want to say thank you very much. Rukundo egumeho! To my beautiful daughters, I can proudly say that I am happy to be 'back' home. Thank you for being strong for me. I LOVE you.

I am equally indebted to all my friends. Thanks all for letting me experience true and meaningful friendship. For the record I would have loved to jot all the names here but I have realised that there are too many to fit in the available space and I also risk forgetting some. Nonetheless, from the many I mention three groups; prayer warrior mamas (mum's fellowship), precious ladies and inspired family club. Individually, I mention Debbie Namirembe for being my practical right hand in everything. I cannot risk to start listing all the errands she executed on my behalf because, honestly speaking, I do not know where to begin and end. Thank you Debbie for being a sister from another mother. Prince Mukombe, thank you for the great moral support, encouragement and the belief that I had what was needed to make this happen. I am glad that I did not disappoint.

Last but certainly not least, I am grateful to Almighty God. It is because of His sufficient grace that I have come this far. All praise and glory be to His name.

Peace Buhwamatsiko Tumuheki

Kampala, October 2016

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List of Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
EFA	Education for All
BIT	Bachelor of Information Technology
BIS	Bachelor of Information Systems
BTVET	Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training
CIT	School of Computing and Informatics Technology
COCIS	College of Computing and Information Sciences
CSC	Bachelor of Science in Computer Science
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoFPED	Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development
NCHE	National Council for Higher Education
NTG	Non-traditional Graduates
NTS	Non-traditional Students
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OTIs	Other Tertiary Institutions
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLE	Primary Leaving Examinations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa

SSM	Schuetze and Slowey Model
SWE	Bachelor of Science in Software Engineering
UACE	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education
UJTC	Uganda Junior Technical Certificate
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund